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ABSTRACT

Conversion, the deliberate transfer of a word from one part of speech to another without any change in its form, is a typically English phenomenon, conditioned but not caused by the extensive wearing-off of word endings and weakening of inflections. It has typically been treated as a syntactic matter, since no new words are produced, and its investigation has been limited by the forms studied and the unsatisfactory models of word formation used for analysis. However, the process of conversion can also be approached through case grammar and a suitable transformational grammar. This approach does not have the flaws of previously used approaches, and may allow more insight into what really happens in the transfer process and how it occurs. Sixty-four references are supplied. (MSE)

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WHAT HAPPENS IN CONVERSION?

1.1. On the face of it, the definition of conversion as the deliberate transfer of a word from one part of speech to another without any change in its form (Zandvoort 1957:264) gives the answer to the question posed in our title. But we are not allowed to look behind the scenes of this process: the term "transfer" does not tell us what really happens and how, any more than do the range of designations, from functional change, functional shift, grammatical homophony and derivation by a suffix zero to zero derivation and identity operation (input = output). Gabriele Stein is absolutely right in characterizing the treatment of conversion as "one of the most unsatisfactory and controversial issues in the study of word-formation" (1977:220, cf. Pennanen 1972). The concepts are not explicit, the system not consistent, and occasionally the description loses sight of the linguistic reality (cf. Lütjen 1970:34 on Lehnert 1970:5-40).

In the present paper conversion will be looked upon as a typically English phenomenon, decisively conditioned though not directly caused by the extensive wearing-off of word-endings and weakening of inflections. As a result, as Adams (1973:14) emhasizes, English nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are identified not primarily by anything characteristic in their formal make-up, but by the way they behave in sentences. Distinctive class-markers being absent, the infinitive has come to be identical with the nominative singular of substantives or the positive form of the adjective. This is the background of the high frequency of multifunction items like down, like, round, etc. quoted by Spitzbardt (1967:613ff.), who refers to Robert Gordon Latham and his "Law of Conversion for English": 'The convertibility of words is the inverse ratio of their inflection, this meaning "peculiar signs expressive of particular parts of speech"' (Handbook of the English Language, London 1851).

Marchand (1969:363) does not accept the specifically English character of conversion, nor does Lipka, according to whom "zero-derivation must be regarded as an extremely productive word-formation process both in English and German" and also in other languages (Lipka 1976:129, Kastovsky 1969). Marchand (op.cit.) contends that derivation by a zero-morpheme began to develop on a larger scale before the disappearance of the final-n of the

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infinitive. Not only does he extend the concept of conversion to OE -ian verbs, he also speaks of zero-derived verbs in French and German (Marchand 1963, 1964 and 1969b, cf. Berndt 1963:306-8). Such an analysis, as well as the likening of Swedish verbs of the pattern fisk - fiska (Biese 1941) to zero derivation, is questionable in its total disregard of the derivational character of the termination of the infinitive in favour of its flexional function (cf. Henzen 1947:224f. and Fleischer 1969:68, 286). Ultimately the above analysis is due to a confusion of conversion with so-called direct derivation, also known as dérivation immédiate, transfert grammatical, unmittelbare Ableitung etc. Although the derivative element - German -en, French -er, Swedish -a - is semantically empty, it is not morphologically zero. Besides, if the -ian, -er, -en and -a element is defined as the ending of one of the forms of the flexional paradigm of the verb, one wonders what, then, would be the 'naked', i.e. the citation form of the verb in question. Evidently, the verb pure and simple does not exist on surface level: the process of verbalization runs from the base (noun) to an inflected form of the verb. In fact, this is exemplified by such partial conversions in English as bird's-nesting (1772), described by the OED as representing a verb to bird's-nest first instanced in 1856. In my book on back-formation (Pennanen 1966:63, 101, 113) the gerund is taken to be basis of the back-formed verb, but it is understandable if the gerund is looked upon as a "direct" verbalization of the noun bird's nest: the conversion verb only exists below the surface level, i.e. in the internalized lexicon of the speech member, emerging in the form of the verb paradigm required in the speech situation. That is to say, the finite verb need not necessarily be deduced from the verbal substantive.

1.2. There are several reasons for the unsatisfactory treatment of conversion. For one thing, conversion as a whole is considered to be a matter of syntax, as no new word in the sense of a phonic concept emerges from the process. For another, the treatment of conversion is dictated by the model of word-formation chosen by the analyst, which depends on the school of linguistics he adheres to as a grammarian. Marchand, whose description of zero-derivation is our point of departure, observes the diachronic-synchronic approach within a structuralist framework. But conversion in itself is a complex and opaque object of analysis, because - and this applies to other categories of word-formation as well - the synchronic analysis of word-derivation does not always parallel the diachronic formation of a word (Dearmond 1969:355). In other words, items that seem to be conversions in the

synchronic view of a (naive) analyst, may diachronically be suffix-derivations, the base and the derivative being of early English origin or borrowed from another language, e.g. OE lúfu → lúfian, ModE love sb. & v. Ellipsis, too, has its share in the process, thus daily sb. ← daily paper.

The analysis of conversion has so far been mainly limited to denominal verbs and deverbative nouns (Lipka 1971:212), which is why the remarks in this paper follow the same lines. A further aspect of the study of conversion is that up to recent times the efforts of analysts have been directed towards a morphological description.

This, however, disregards the fact that conversions are marked by context instead of a morphological element (Pennanen 1976:294f.). This is to say that conversion operates in speech, the basic unit of which is, according to Saussure and more particularly Gardiner, the sentence. The products of conversion, on the other hand, are recorded in the dictionary (and probably in the individual lexicons of speech members) as words, which are the units of language. Accordingly, conversion has been analysed outside its proper and natural basis, which is utterance and/or the sentence, or, rather, it has been analysed on two levels at one time to the exclusion of the level of speech.

1.3. The following conspectus provides a survey of the various types of conversion in English according to Quirk (1972:100ff.). In my paper on lexical markers (Pennanen 1971:42) there is a survey of the dimensions of conversion in English according to six grammarians; cf. also Marchand 1969: 360. Table 2 illustrates what Quirk defines as "minor categories" of conversion, which some grammarians would exclude from consideration.

1.	NOUN → VERB	I'd like to cash this cheque.
2.	ADJECTIVE → VERB	They emptied the bottle.
3.	VERB → NOUN	Let's take a walk.
4.	ADVERB → NOUN	The ups and downs of life.
5.	ADVERB → VERB	They downed the weapons.
6.	INTERJECTION → VERB	He was hailed as a hero.
7.	NOUN → ADJECTIVE	A very Oxbridge accent.
8.	ADJECTIVE → NOUN	A half of bitter.
9.	ADJECTIVE → ADVERB	It serves him right.
10.	ADVERB → ADJECTIVE	Is this the down train?

Table 1. Types of conversion.

CLOSED SYSTEM WORD → NOUN		I must know the how and why of the plan.
PHRASE → NOUN		He was one of the also-rans.
PHRASE → ADJECTIVE		An upper-class accent.
AFFIX → NOUN		Pacifism is not his favourite ism.

Table 2. Minor categories of conversion.

It goes without saying that the borderline between 'total' and 'partial' conversions, distinguished by the line between 6 and 7 in Table 1, is fluid not only in the sense that some analysts would not include types 7 to 10 in conversion at all but also on account of the tendency of partial conversions to go over to the total class by accepting the full grammatical properties of the new part of speech. This has led some analysts to adopt a distinctive terminology: 'conversion' is used of partial conversions, no new word being formed in this case, and 'zero-derivation' for full or total conversions which yield a new word or lexical item (Dokulil 1968:56f.). Lyons (1977:522f.), for his part, remarks that conversion, "the derivational process whereby an item is adapted to a new world-class without the addition of an affix", carries different implications from the term 'zero-affixation'. Cf. Beard (1977), who suggests that lexical and syntactic derivation on one hand and affixation on the other should be kept separate.

2.1. According to Marchand (1969:2) word-formation is that branch of the science of language which studies the patterns on which a language forms new lexical items. It is understood, though not explicitly stated, that the material basis on which such patterns operate is the primary vocabulary. In other words, word formation is concerned with secondary formations. Coseriu (1970) describes word-formation as a component of grammar in its own right; such a grammar of forming new words operates on concepts different from the traditional grammar and the traditional categories of word-formation.

To be relevant to word-formation thus defined, an item must be a composite formation, a syntagma made up of a determinatum and a determinant, and analysable morphologically, grammatically and semantically. In establishing this set of criteria Marchand is somewhat ambiguous: the analysis can be morphological, semantic or grammatical (1965:117, 1969:31), and "a combination of all three in equal parts is necessary"; but on the other hand "a morphologic description applies to all types (of nexus substantives) and is indispensable" (1969:31). Cf. Gunter 1972:4.

2.2. In the 1960 edition of the Categories Marchand describes conversion (in his opinion an 'infelicitous' term) or zero-derivation as the use of

"certain stems for the derivation of lexical syntagmas with the determinatum assuming a zero form" (294). In the second edition the definition runs like this: "the use of a word as a determinant in a syntagma whose determinatum is not expressed in phonic form but understood to be present in content, thanks to an association with other syntagmas where the element of content has its counterpart on the plane of phonic expression" (1969:359). This analysis is illustrated by the equation: clean adj. is to clean v. as legal to legalize. Here we have an illuminating example of the problems that an a priori adoption of a linguistic philosophy - in the present case the structuralist school of thought - creates by predetermining the treatment of the items within the field of study.

2.3. The paradoxical character of the structuralist analysis of conversion is evident to common sense: a morphologically monomorphemic item like clean v. is declared to be a syntagma, whereas syntagmatic derivatives like the OE verbs in -ian, German verbs in -en or French in -er are explained as zero-derived. As the determinatum is that part of a syntagma which can stand for the whole, it seems problematic how a syntagma, a composite form, can be built on nothing. The proportional equations adduced to illustrate the associative presence of the derivative element (see also Lyons 1977:523 release v.:release sb. = justify:justification and Kastovsky 1969:8 bake:baker = cheat v.:cheat sb) do not apply to verbs zero-derived from adverbs (to out, to down)and to interjections (to hail), there being no verbs derived from adverbs and interjections by means of suffixes. Nevertheless, there ought to be 'something' to take over the role of the determinatum.

In his review of Adams 1973, Lipka (1975:382-89) points out that Adams classifies zero-derivations according to the direction of the derivation (noun to verb, verb to noun, adjective to verb etc.) but the subclassification is carried out on the basis of the syntactic function of the base in a paraphrase (underlying) sentence, e.g. "the noun is the object in a paraphrase sentence", or the complement, or the indirect object etc. Deverbal nouns, again, are split up into three groups according to the role of the verb: the agent, the object or the concrete result, and the abstract result of the action (Adams 1973:51).

Lipka's comment on this is highly interesting: "If the concept of zero is really taken seriously, it is not the noun which denotes the agent etc. but rather the zero morpheme, since it is the very parallelism of cheat/∅ vs. swindler, cook/∅ vs. baker, spy/∅ vs. observer on which the theoretical

concept of zero is based" (1975.386). This is not a convincing way of dealing with the dichotomy of morphologically indivisible but semantically complex items (cf. Ohlander 1972:306). The quoted word pairs are grammatical synonyms, each denoting the agent that performs the action denoted by the basic verb, just as clean, legalize, widen and enlarge are the pattern "to make object like what the base denotes", but that does not mean that they should be formally commensurate (Winter 1964:14).

2.4. Marchand and with him many others (Kastovsky, Lipka, Lyons) find the solution to the structural problem of conversions by introducing the zero-morpheme: it provides the determinatum that we do not see or hear. It is true that the opposition of something to nothing is a fact in language, as was shown by Saussure, but it is a paradigmatic phenomenon. When extended beyond the scope of the paradigm of one and the same word and used as an instrument of linguistic description, zero becomes highly dubious, nearing the status of the Emperor's clothes "until the opposite is proved", as Barri (1977:22) describes the case. While Winter (1964) shows that zero cannot even be an allomorph of suffixes and Matthews (1974:122) bluntly declares that zero is no morph, Kastovsky (1969:8f.) contends that zero is not to be looked upon as an allomorph but as an independent morpheme; Lyons (1977:522), too, classifies the identity element or zero with other derivational elements of the same function. Thus, the verbalizing identity element ($N + NV_q = V_q$) belongs to the same class as -en, -ify, -ize and -ate. Cf. also Gauger 1977 (Festschrift Marchad) and Crystal 1971:192.

The decisive argument against the 'structural' zero is, as Matthews (1974:117) points out, that one cannot determine its distribution: "One cannot say that in some forms 'nothing' is 'there' but in others it is not 'there', that the 'presence' of 'nothing' in one form 'contrasts' with the 'absence' of 'nothing' in another, and so on." This is in full agreement with the classic description by Haas (1957), aptly illustrated by Leitner's analysis (1973) of ornative and privative denominal verbs formed without an ornative or privative affix as well as without a verbal suffix (to bone, to arm); here, the stage is completely cleared for the zero to show up and operate. See also Leitner 1974:37-86.

In his analysis of the zero-morpheme Kastovsky (1969) emphasizes that zero-derivation is not only a straightforward shift of function or a change of word-class, but also further semantic elements accompany the process. In other words, the concept of conversion does not take into account the syntagmatic character of such formations; Lyons (1977:523) distinguishes

between coversion ("a derivational process whereby an item is adapted to a new word-class without the addition of an affix") and zero-affixation ("the addition to the stem of the identity-element functioning as an affix), cf. Hansen 1969. Significanly enough, Kastovsky argues that walk sb. is not a derivative with different semantic developments ("eine Ableitung mit verschiedenen Bedeutungsentwicklungen") but a set of homonymous words that go back to different tagmemes of the kernel sentence, a line of thought that compares with his analysis of cheat sb. as someone who not only cheats but does so habitually. This reminds one also of the 'dérivation lexicale'and 'dérivation syntactique' proposed by Kuryłowicz on one hand and of the process of lexicalization on the other (see e.g. Lipka 1977:159). Conversions are lexicalized items in so far as they can be disambiguated only on the basis of the context, something that Kastovsky, too, had in mind in stating that context and situation are responsible for the selection of the "theme" in the underlying structure (viz. zero-derivations, 1968:23-25, and Lipka 1976:129).

All these and similar arguments seem to be beating about the bush in face of the evident fact that derivation in general and conversion in particular take place on two levels, of form and of content, form being subordinate to content, as Leitner (1974: 12 and passim) emphasizes. Thus it is not possible to attach the new grammatical and lexical meaning to a formal nothing: zero-derivations are an exception to the rule of diagrammatical iconicity (diagrammatische Ikonizität), as Plank (1981:88) points out - "more of form" does not correspond to "more of meaning". What Motsch (1970:563) states about N + N type of compounds applies to word-formation in general: the surface structure does not provide all the information that is needed for the reconstruction of the corresponding deep structure, cf. Lightner 1975:632. So the morphological approach leads the analyst into a blind alley, and we must look for another more promising point of departure.

3.1. Above (see 1.2.) it was suggested that conversion yields items which are marked by the context. An item like 'pen', considered out of its context, is neither noun or verb (Martinet 1979:144), nor is it possible to attach a word-class to such multifunction words as down, like, round etc. when considered in isolation. Word-class, indeed, is an impress or character that a morpheme or a combination of morphemes receives when it is realized as a word in parole to enable it to take its place as a certain member of the sentence in accordance with the sentence plan of the speaker, as Lindgren (1964:221) aptly points out. Seen from this angle conversion appears

as a process rather than a morpheme (cf. Crystal 1971:196), and zero is another way of expressing the fact that no formal element is made use of: rather, it implies the transfer of an item into another function in the context of the speech situation.

3.2. When we are about to say something (or write, for that matter), we know what we want to say before knowing how to say it, cf. Wundt's definition of the sentence as "the linguistic expression for the arbitrary dismemberment of a complex presentation into its component parts, these being placed in logical relations to one another" (Völkerpsychologie. Die Sprache II:245, translation by Gardiner 1932:241f.). In a recent book Frans Plank introduces a similar concept viz. "the complex conceptual pattern" (ein complexes Begriffsschema, Plank 1981:47), whose units are topicalized (thematiziert) within the limits of lexical possibilities and needs of communication. The following analysis of the German verb aufgabeln may illustrate Plank's idea: "etwas (PATIENS) durch eine geeignete Tätigkeit (MODUS) oder durch geeignete Hilfsmittel (MITTEL oder INSTRUMENT) auf der Oberfläche von etwas (ORT) anbringen".

From our point of view the interesting question revolves about the character of those 'component parts" as well as their origin. It does not seem very likely that the needed lexical items are taken ready-made from their pigeonholes in the lexicon, i.e. native speakers of a language do not learn all derived words by heart (Ljung 1970:14); these are, rather, somehow generated in accordance with a set of rules (cf. Gruber 1967:10, who suggests that lexical items are not "put in" in phrase markers, but generated by subtrees within trees).

3.3. What kind of bases these lexical items originate from is a question so vast that it cannot be entered upon in this paper. However, reference should be made to the theory of 'bare lexemes' to which word-classes, among further grammatical attributes, can be attached by the speakers 'at will' (see D. Bolinger "Categories, Features, Attributes" in Brno Studies in English 8 1969:37-41 and Lipka 1971 with further references) on one hand and, on the other, to the concept of 'word-form' (Gardiner 1932:132-150 and Pennanen 1980), particularly in its interpretation of what we have called multiple conversions. Gardiner thinks the inner word-form of such items is concealed behind a number of alternatives, which are realized in outer word-form in accordance with the demands of expression. That is to say, they are made to signify their 'nuclear' meaning in the substantive way, or the adjective way, or the verb way and so forth, something that reminds of the

modi significandi of the Schoolmen. Cf. Coseriu 1972, where an analysis of the common semantic element in strings like rich - riches - enrich or German arm - Armut - verarmen is attempted; quite clearly we are dealing here with a below-surface element, not expressable in one word. Perhaps it is that 'something' that Gunter (1972:1) says is expressed by widen as a verb while wide expresses the same 'something' as an adjective.

3.4. It seems to me that this is the starting point of a process of word-formation that also includes conversion: the sub-surface level Protean notion, without morphological shape, is transposed to surface level according to the needs of expression and its potential of signification. These potentials are part of the individual speech member's lexicon (and appear in dictionary entries as e.g. round, which is recorded as sb., adj., v., adv. and prep.).

The transposition to the surface of such sub-surface level semantic elements may be achieved without any morphological changes in the base, or it may need the support of morphological measures. In the first case the derivative process admits of description as conversion, in the second affixal derivation.

Sometimes conversion is supported by slight modifications of the base like stress shift (réfill vs refíll) or voicing (use sb. vs. use v.) or vowel change (Marchad 1969:377, Quirk 1972:1017). In some cases the result of this kind of transposition is a full syntagma, i.e. a sentence: while fish sb. gives the verb to fish, deer does not yield to *deer, the only possibility being to stalk the deer, to hunt the deer. The above approach leads the analysis of word-formation in general and of conversion in particular towards a framework whose basis is not the instruments or means to form new lexical items but the semantic jobs these new items, irrespective of the way they are built up, are doing in communication. Such a model has been presented by Coseriu (1977), cf. my comments (1978:118f., 1980:8f.).

3.5. As regards conversion, its transfer from a sub-surface level conceptual pattern (Plank) or complex presentation to the surface level is the process whose description and analysis is a challenge to the new schools of grammar. Robert B. Lees was one of the earliest to attempt a transformational approach (The Grammar of English Nominalizations, The Hague 1960), and Chomsky, too, has dealt with this subject in Remarks on Nominalization (1970). In his "Notes on the 'Conversion' of Nouns into Verbs in English" (System Development Corporation, Santa Monica 1968) Carter R. Revard expresses some doubt as to the transformational character in the Chomskyan

sense of the process of conversion, as "semantic features are added or lost in some fashion". Ljung's thesis (1970) is a generative study of high-frequency adjectives in English, and Leitner's analysis of denominal verbalization in English is based on "a special version of the generative grammar". The unpublished Ph.D. thesis of D.R.J. Knowles on De-adjectival adverbials in transformational grammar (London 1970) is a further departure on the TG basis; however, it was not available to me in the preparation of this paper.

It is not for us to enter upon these studies and to offer an opinion on the optimum approach, but it seems to me that some form of case grammar would afford promising prospects of describing the topicalization of the component parts of a complex conceptual pattern (the "what" we wish to say).

3.6. The prominent role of conversion in English word-formation is an expression of the influence of certain linguistic tendencies that seem to converge in the case of English. All languages, but English in particular, tend to function in accordance with a law of economy of expression, i.e. a maximum of content with a minimum of linguistic means and effort. There is evidence of this outside conversion, both in derivation and flexion, which easily operate with unmarked inflectionally neutral forms, (see Jespersen MEG II, 7.11, Adams 1973:58 and Pennanen 1976:295). Examples are tear-gas, tooth-decay, gutless, (a) five-day (week), where the neutral form functions for plural; in enemy attack, pigtail it stands for the genitive. The English adjective has done away with all inflectional markers, and in verb flexion the marked forms represent only a fraction of the marked inflected forms that are used in French, German or, for that matter, in Finnish (modal auxiliaries, cut, hit, put, set; subjunctive and imperative, watch-dog, workman). Even sentence function may be changed without formal (structural) changes, e.g. He is well? Who cares?, though in spoken language intonation serves as marker. We meet this economizing tendency in a child's efforts to learn its native language: nominal forms are made to function as verbs, adjectives and adverbials as well, something that is repeated in the efforts of a foreign language learner.

As regards denominal and deverbal types of conversion, Biese (1941:339ff.) has shown that the tendency of many Indo-European languages to use the bare verb stem as action noun and as agent noun goes back to Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. There are instances of it, besides in English, in French, German and Swedish in the form of so-called root-nominalization (Guilbert 1975:165 and Söderbergh 1967:79, 97, 127).

3.7. Seen from a linguistically less orthodox angle, conversion may be described as the naive speaker's attempt to see how far he can get in expressing himself by using the naked word, the stem, without having to resort to derivative elements. Now, it is possible to conceive of conversion as the one extreme on a cline at the opposite end of which we find full derivative patterns, made up of root + theme + derivative morpheme.

This treatment gives conversion its proper place as a category of derivation without the difficulties that a structural analysis tries to solve by introducing the zero. Back-formation is another square peg that must be forced into the round structural holes; it starts from what is believed to be a composite and derives a new item which is a moneme, something that cannot be denied although the naive speaker will consider the derived item the base (cf. Pennanen 1975 & 1978). Marchand's treatment does not convince: he overemphasizes the synchronic approach and the criterial force of content as opposed to form. One misses a more detailed analysis of his demand of the threefold syntagmaticity; he seems to have had in mind the basic role of content (meaning), but on the other hand he had to adhere to the determinant - determinatum pattern his model is based upon. It would have been a great help if Marchand had arranged the three types of syntagma in hierarchical order with due consideration of the levels on which they should be satisfied. What holds for the underlying sentence does not necessarily have to be expressed on the surface. To suggest that such grammatical and semantic elements (features) are conveyed to the surface by the zero morpheme (Kastovsky) is to sweep the problem under the carpet.

In the present analysis conversions are semantic syntagmas in the first place; that they are also grammatical syntagmas is a consequence of this, "the component parts being put in logical relations to one another". But conversions are not analysable as morphological syntagmas, it would be a contradictio in adjecto if they were. As Ljung (1970:19) emphasizes, "we cannot always expect there to be isomorphism between the morphemic and the semantic structures of a word" (cf. Ohlander and Winter sub 2.3.).

4.0. By way of a summary the following observations suggest themselves.

4.1. Conversion or "derivation by a suffix zero" is a process which does not lend itself to morphemic analysis.

4.2. The process of conversion takes place on the level of speech (sentence, utterance) or parole. Its products, again, belong to the level of language (langue), whose units are words. Therefore it should be analysed on the level of its origin: instead of affixal markers it is the context

that advises us how to understand such an item.

4.3. Zero does not explain conversion as its key element, for it is secondary in character. After the process of conversion it is possible to identify and define the zero. Analysis by means of zero reminds one of putting the cart before the horse.

4.4. In the light of available investigations it seems that the very process of conversion can profitably be approached on the basis of case grammar (which describes the logical relations of 'the component parts of a presentation') and a suitable type of transformational(-generative) grammar. It is only on the basis of transformational descriptions of this kind that we expect to gain a deeper insight into the nature of the process of conversion and find a proper answer to the question we have posed. Thus, it remains to be seen what kind of rules, restrictions and generalizations can be established in this highly productive and versatile field of word-formation, and what degree and character of semantic and grammatical as well as extra-linguistic factors and their interrelations can be distinguished in the process. It does not seem possible that zero could account for the semantic and other features that disappear or are added on the way from base to derivative.

4.5. As it does not seem likely that speech members should learn all conversions by heart, the lexicon of an individual speaker will contain the bases and the conversion rules, and, naturally, some conversions, particularly if they are highly lexicalized. Actually, conversion and topicalization seem to have quite a good deal in common.

4.6. Finally, the law of economy of expression and the specially English predilection for operating with unmarked forms in expression and construction as well as in word-formation should be mentioned as powerful factors in conversion. But what really happens in conversion over and above the transfer of an item from one function (or word-class) to another, remains so far hidden in the black box of the human language machine whose secrets linguists and grammarians are trying to penetrate.

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